

## Message Text

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FM USMISSION USUN NY

TO SECSTATE WASDC 3281

UNCLAS USUN 1048

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: XA TPHY

SUBJ: AFRICAN DROUGHT

REF: STATE 057894; USUN 1000

1. APROPOS OF AFRICAN DROUGHT QUESTION TWO USUN OFFICERS WHO HAVE TRAVELLED RECENTLY IN BOTH EAST AND WEST AFRICA RETURNED WITH IMPRESSION THAT CHANGES IN AFRICAN CLIMATE MAY BE GEOGRAPHICALLY EVEN MORE WIDESPREAD THAN WE HAD REALIZED FROM REPORTING RECEIVED HERE.

2. NEITHER OF THESE OFFICERS HAS SCIENTIFIC TRAINING. HOWEVER, FROM DISCUSSIONS WITH OFFICIALS AND LEADERS IN BOTH EAST AND WEST AFRICA, THEY INDEPENDENTLY REACHED CONCLUSION THAT SPREAD OF DROUGHT CONDITIONS BY NO MEANS CONFINED TO SAHEL AND EAST AFRICA. EACH REPRATEDLY ENCOUNTERED IDEA THAT BULK OF AFRICAN CONTINENT MAY NOW BE UNDERGOING CHANGE OF CLIMATE RATHER THAN SERIES OF "BAD YEARS". IN SOME WEST AFRICAN COASTAL COUNTRIES OF HEAVY RAINFALL, ONSET OF RAINY SEASON INCREASINGLY DELAYED IN PAST TWO YEARS. "HARMATTAN" HAS THIS BEEN SUSTAINED PHENOMENON IN SOME WEST AFRICAN COASTAL AREAS IN WHICH ITS PRESENCE IS NORMALLY ONLY HINTED.

3. NEITHER OF REPORTING OFFICERS, AND CERTAINLY NOT USUN, SUGGESTS THAT THESE NON-SCIENTIFIC, IMPRESSIONISTIC REPORTS

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BE GIVEN UNDUE EMPHASIS. HOWEVER, THEIR IMPRESSIONS WERE

SUFFICIENTLY STRONG TO SUGGEST THAT US GOVERNMENT MIGHT WELL TAKE PRECAUTION OF FOCUSING QUALIFIED SCIENTIFIC EYES ON QUESTION. PERHAPS STUDIES BASED ON ERTS DATA CAN SUGGEST SOME CONCLUSIONS. ADDITIONALLY, LEADING ACADEMIC CLIMATOLOGISTS MIGHT BE STIMULATED TO EXAMINE SITUATION.

4. SAHELIAN DROUGHT, DESPITE TERRIBLE TOLL IN HUMAN LIFE AND WEALTH, HAS PRODUCED LESS REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL FALLOUT THAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER DROUGHT IN EAST AFRICAN UPLANDS WILL HAVE SIMILARLY LIMITED POLITICAL EFFECTS. SHOULD HEAVILY-POPULATED, RELATIVELY DEVELOPED COASTAL AREAS OF TRADITIONALLY HEAVY RAINFALL BE SUBJECTED TO SEASONAL WATER SHORTAGES, DEPLETING RESERVOIRS THAT SUSTAIN CITY POPULATIONS AND PROVIDE HYDRO-ELECTRIC POWER, HUMAN TRAGEDY WOULD BE MORE DRAMATIC AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS MORE SERIOUS.

5. COMMENT BY AMB SCALI: I AM SUFFICIENTLY STRUCK BY THESE OBSERVATIONS AND QUESTIONS TO RECOMMEND THAT USG TRY TO RE-EXAMINE THE PROBLEM. IF CLIMATE CHANGES ARE OCCURRING AND LARGE POPULATIONS IF FOR MAJOR READJUSTMENT DIFFICULTIES, THE WORLD CANNOT AFFORD TO BE LATE IN IDENTIFYING A CRISIS OF LARGER DIMENSIONS THAN INITIALLY FORECAST.  
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